

VZCZCXRO7643
PP RUEHAG RUEHROV
DE RUEHMD #0753/01 1160757
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 260757Z APR 07
FM AMEMBASSY MADRID
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2355
INFO RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHAS/AMEMBASSY ALGIERS PRIORITY 3934
RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT PRIORITY 1145
RUEHRB/AMEMBASSY RABAT PRIORITY 6016
RUEHLA/AMCONSUL BARCELONA PRIORITY 2640
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 0340

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 MADRID 000753

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

NEA/FO FOR GORDON GRAY
NEA/MAG FOR ROBERT EWING

E.O. 12958: DECL: 04/26/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [SP](#) [MO](#) [AG](#) [WI](#)
SUBJECT: SPANISH ENCOURAGE LONGER MINURSO RENEWAL

MADRID 00000753 001.2 OF 003

Classified By: DCM Hugo Llorens for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (C) SUMMARY: NEA DAS Gordon Gray discussed the Western Sahara over lunch with a team of high-level MFA officials April 19 in Madrid. Alvaro Iranzo, the Spanish DG for North Africa, told Gray that the Spanish want a UNSCR which impels the two sides to negotiate without preconditions. While favoring a six-month renewal, Spain is more flexible on the length of the mandate. The Spanish would also like negotiations between the parties to take place under UN auspices, although they would not oppose a facilitator to help find common ground between the two sides. Given its proximity to the region, Spain is directly concerned with preventing any possible outbreak of instability in the Western Sahara. Iranzo underscored that Spain is pleased that the U.S. is taking an active interest in the matter, and agrees the Moroccan autonomy plan has merit. Iranzo said that though we had some tactical differences, Spain shares our strategic goal of resolving the Western Sahara issues in order to promote an integrated, stable Maghreb. Iranzo shared a proposed Spanish draft UNSCR for the MINURSO renewal. Gray said he thought the main point for debate would be the length of the rollover. DG Iranzo also extended an invitation to A/S Welch to visit Madrid. Presidential advisor Diego de Ojeda told Gray that President Zapatero is heavily invested politically in the fate of North Africa.
END SUMMARY.

12. (U) During a stop in Madrid April 19 to consult on the Western Sahara, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Near Eastern Affairs Gordon Gray held an in-depth discussion on the current U.S. approach toward the Western Sahara dispute with MFA DG Alvaro Iranzo, and a team of experts from MFA, Middle East and UN divisions including Juan Manuel Linares, Deputy Director General for the UN, Felix Costales, Deputy Political Director, Javier Sancho, Chief of Staff to the FM, and Federico Torres, Chief of Staff to the Deputy FM. The DCM and PolCouns attended from the Embassy. Discussions took place over lunch in the Foreign Minister's private dining room, a special courtesy which reflected the GOS appreciation for the consultations and the importance the Foreign Minister attached to the issue.

//TURNING POINT//

13. (C) DG Iranzo opened the lunch by providing an historical overview of the Spanish position on the Western Sahara and the various efforts to reach a mutually agreeable solution.

Iranzo noted that Morocco and Algeria, which are the main sources of Muslim immigration to Spain, are vital neighbors and factor heavily in Spanish foreign policy; he added that in the age of globalization, Spain in particular as well as the rest of the EU feel compelled to reach a solution in the Western Sahara that would open the door to North African integration. The recent terrorist attacks in North Africa are just additional proof of the need to increase cooperation in the region. Iranzo said the only modern comparison to the frozen border between Algeria and Morocco is the DMZ on the Korean Peninsula, and he underscored that the two nations are natural allies that share homogeneous populations and strategic interests. Spain would like to bring the leaders together through the EuroMediterranean Process and other international bodies in order to improve the region's capacity to combat terrorism and poverty.

//ACHIEVE A SOLUTION WITH NO CLEAR WINNER//

¶4. (C) Spain wants the April UNSC resolution to compel bilateral negotiations without preconditions between the Polisario and Morocco under UN auspices with the assistance of a facilitator designated by the UNSYG. The UN's role is historically established in the conflict and provides a guarantee to both parties, and Iranzo said Spain was "religiously" committed to efficient multilateralism. The facilitator should not be a traditional mediator but should compel the two sides to find common ground rather than proposing a third-party solution. Iranzo said that Spain had no specific preference on who would facilitate negotiations, though he noted that current Personal Envoy Van Walsum does not have the confidence of both parties. The end goal, according to Iranzo, should be a negotiated settlement with no clear winner. Without a mutually acceptable solution, it would be very difficult to achieve a thaw in relations between Algeria and Morocco. He cautioned that the worst

MADRID 00000753 002.2 OF 003

possible result from a Spanish perspective would be another technical rollover of MINURSO, and the international community should refuse any attempt at this by either party. On the need to maintain the ceasefire between the Polisario and Morocco, he said, "This is a must for Spain and the EU." As it remains extremely difficult to identify the proper voting population for a referendum on Western Sahara, Spain thinks any referendum should not be the first step in any solution but should take place years down the road.

//MANDATE RENEWAL//

¶5. (C) Turning to the length of the MINURSO mandate renewal, Iranzo said that Spain favored a six-month mandate that includes a report by UNSYG Moon on the Western Sahara after two months, providing the basis for negotiations prior to the next renewal. He cautioned that a two month renewal would be too short a period for Polisario decision making to take place. He also warned against using MINURSO as leverage, noting that the Moroccans benefit from MINURSO's continued presence while the Polisario feel they have nothing to lose by MINURSO's departure. Spain, for its part, considers MINURSO an essential element in maintaining stability so long as there is no agreement on the status of the Western Sahara and therefore would not want the current process to lead to the end of MINURSO unless conditions were appropriate. The Spanish have told the Moroccans not to be over-anxious in moving ahead with their autonomy plan and to keep their expectations low.

¶6. (C) Gray agreed with much of Iranzo's analysis, but he expressed the USG's slight disappointment in the UNSYG's report on the proposals. The report treated the Moroccan and Polisario plans equally and did not give enough credit to the sincere Moroccan effort to craft a solution, while the Polisario simply recycled the Baker Plan. He noted that the U.S. was flexible with regard to the auspices of any negotiations and could live with UN auspices, but was not

pushing for that outcome. He added that Secretary Rice had told the Algerian Foreign Minister that negotiations without preconditions were the only way to proceed, and that the most important point was that both sides sit down to talk. On mandate renewal length, Gray told Iranzo that the U.S. favors a two-month mandate in order to maintain the pressure on both parties and to signal that this renewal is not a continuation of business as usual. The UN also should not give the Polisario a permanent veto over the process. If the Polisario were to choose not to take advantage of the two-month window to accept negotiations, then the U.S. would be prepared to support the Moroccan plan as the preferred solution. He explained that if the negotiations do not begin after two months, it was not the U.S. intention at this point to terminate MINURSO.

¶17. (C) Iranzo said that any disagreement between Spain and the U.S. was over tactics and not strategy. He praised the previous efforts of James Baker and noted that the likely solution to the conflict would be found somewhere in the confines of Baker's previous proposals. In that sense he said, "The Baker plans are not dead, they are hibernating." On a brief mandate renewal, he said that the Security Council should not provide any easy excuse for either party to opt out, preserving the stalemate. He suggested that three or four months might provide more time to get things done, especially given the brand new SYG who has not entirely focused on the matter. Gray said that a two-month rollover would not shut the door to any future rollovers, it would just maintain the pressure. He also said that the achievement of a solution would probably not impact MINURSO's short term status, as any solution would take some time to implement.

//SPANISH INITIATIVE?//

¶18. (C) Iranzo told Gray that Spain would be unveiling new programs and initiatives, both from President Zapatero and Foreign Minister Moratinos, including significant international assistance to both Algeria and Morocco, in order to bring the Maghreb closer to the EU and the West. (NOTE: At an earlier meeting with PolCouns, Iranzo made this same point, saying that his minister would be "pulling a rabbit out of a hat" in North Africa. END NOTE.)

//POLISARIO UNITY//

MADRID 00000753 003.2 OF 003

¶19. (C) Gray asked Iranzo what the Spanish assessment was of unity within the Polisario. Iranzo said it was a matter of pressure and time. As long as the Moroccan government lacked subtlety in its handling of the matter, the Polisario would remain united by opposition to the Moroccans. But if the Moroccans start offering the Sahrawi "a way out of misery, there will be fractures." He also viewed the Moroccan refusal to use Sahrawi symbols in its autonomy plan as a mistake, saying that Morocco should encourage the Sahrawi symbols' usage in the autonomous region, thereby minimizing their utility for separatists.

//TERRORIST ATTACKS IN NORTH AFRICA//

¶10. (C) Deputy Political Director Costales asked Gray for the U.S. assessment of the recent bombings in North Africa. Gray said that the Algerian attack clearly showed the adoption of Al-Qa'ida tactics by the Maghreb extremists, but the U.S. has not yet found any link between the Algiers and Casablanca attacks, nor the thwarted attack in Tunisia in January. Iranzo said that Spain is very worried about these new developments given the extent of Spanish interests in the two countries. He said Spanish interests will be a target in the future in North Africa. However, he also expressed hope that the public reaction to the attacks was perhaps evidence of a growing popular condemnation of such methods. He stated that while Morocco and Algeria claim to have good bilateral

CT cooperation, "there is undoubtedly a lot of room for improvement."

//PRESIDENT ZAPATERO INVESTED IN NORTH AFRICA//

¶11. (C) Gray also met with Diego de Ojeda, a foreign policy advisor to President Zapatero in the Spanish equivalent of the national security council. Ojeda provided Spanish political context, saying that Spain is in favor of applying pressure on the parties, but given the Maghreb's geographic proximity, Spain is also very wary of a potential return to violence. In addition, the Zapatero government is being criticized by both the left and the right for allegedly abandoning the traditional Spanish stance of support for Sahrawi independence. He said that President Zapatero has invested significant political capital in improving Spain's relations with North Africa, and the Western Sahara will remain a critical issue for the GOS. He repeated Iranzo's statement that Spain is happy that the U.S. is forcefully engaged on the issue. Algeria's recent message to Spain has been that the Western Sahara is not a "causus belli" with Morocco, and he agreed that Polisario engagement would depend on the amount of pressure exerted upon them.

¶12. (C) On the North Africa attacks, de Ojeda described the Algerian attacks as evidence of a new "Al Qa'ida franchise" in Algeria, but not necessarily of a coordinated strategy across the Middle East or even the Maghreb. He assessed the threat to Spain as very serious, given its proximity to North Africa, the amount of trans-migration through Spain, the ongoing March 11 trial, and the recent statements by Ayman Al-Zawahiri about reconquering Al-Andalus. The Spanish North African enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla also remain a likely target, although de Ojeda speculated that extremists might not choose to attack there, as this would provoke a security lockdown that would take away one of their relatively safe havens in the EU.

¶13. (U) DAS Gordon Gray cleared this message.

Visit Embassy Madrid's Classified Website;
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/madrid/>

Aguirre